Pacific Islands Fishery News

Newsletter of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

Winter 2002

Squid fisherman Bob Endreson gives Council Executive Director Kitty Simonds a tour of the *Pacific Venture*, during a port call in Honolulu. The vessel is one of several to recently enter the North Pacific squid fishery.

Council to Assess the North Pacific Squid Fishery

Between 1920 and 1941, Hawaii had a commercial squid fishery developed by Okinawan immigrants with up to 40 vessels in the fleet. The fishery was closed when maritime restrictions prevented fishing at night. After the restrictions were lifted at the end of the war, fishermen had larger vessels with capabilities of keeping large fish cool and so they directed their efforts to catching tuna.

Today, there is renewed interest in catching squid, and the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, meeting in October 2001, has recommended that an assessment of the fishery be made.

Among the Council's concerns is the need to develop fisheries to replace those recently lost or threatened with closure. The Hawaii longline swordfish fishery was shut down in 2001 as a result of a court order. Lobster and other fisheries in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are threatened with permanent closure as a result of 11th hour executive orders issued by President Clinton.

Other concerns are the potential for overfishing and possible impacts on the ecosystem due to bycatch and/or prey reduction. Similar concerns caused California Gov. Gray Davis to sign legislation in late September 2001 to protect that state's squid resources. According to the news media, squid is California's largest fishery both in terms of volume and dollar value: more than 125,000 tons of squid with a wholesale value of $30 million were brought in by fishing boats in 2000. In addition to their economic value, squid are a key link in the

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NMFS Approves Eligibility Criteria for Indigenous Programs

Indigenous communities in American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii and the Northern Mariana Islands (NMI) are one significant step closer to gaining access to fisheries under the authority of the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council. The Western Pacific Community Development Program (CDP) and Western Pacific Community Demonstration Project Program (CDPP) both cleared a major hurdle when the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) approved identical eligibility criteria for these programs this summer.

Under the CDP, eligible communities could receive two of the 10 limited-entry

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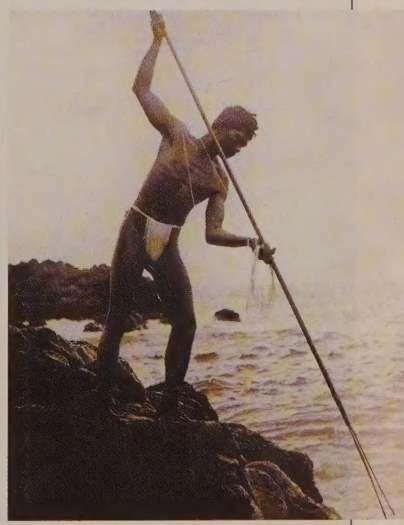

Hawaiian man spearfishing from a rock, near Hana, Maui, Hawaii, ca. 1890. (Bishop Museum photo)

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Pacific food chain, providing food for salmon, sea lions, whales, dolphins and seabirds, the media reports.

One company that has recently entered the North Pacific squid fishery operates three to four vessels in the 90-foot range. The boats were purchased in Seattle and outfitted in New Zealand. One of the vessels, the *Pacific Venture*, recently docked in Honolulu. It has 24 automatic stations, with two reels per station. According to company manager Bob Endreson, squids brought aboard the boats are cleaned, packed in blocks and then frozen for shipment to Japan. Each vessel offloads 5 to 6 tons of squid.

These new entrants join a fleet of about 15 Japanese vessels already fishing in the North Pacific region.

Three of 21 squid species that have been taken in Hawaii waters may be of particular interest to the Council.

***Ommastephes bartramii*, also known as *aka-ika*, red flying squid or neon flying squid, is a prized food fish. The pelagic species spawns in Hawaii waters and offers a future to local fisheries, where potential for exploitation is considerable.**

Photo courtesy of NMFS Honolulu Laboratory

Ommastephes bartramii, also known as *aka-ika*, red flying squid or neon flying squid, is a pelagic species that occurs in abundance in the Northwestern to North Central Pacific Ocean. The 1990 annual yield for the fishery of 300,000 mt was valued dockside at about US$1 billion. Virtually all of this catch was taken by driftnet vessels from Taiwan, South Korea and Japan operating in the North Pacific, from about 30° to 45°N and largely due north of the Hawaiian archipelago. However, this method of harvesting resulted in excessive bycatch and was banned internationally from the beginning of January 1993.

The Japanese continue to jig for squid in the North Central Pacific for part of the year, until a portion of the adult population moves south during the winter into the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) surrounding Hawaii, which is a major spawning area for the squid. The species offers a future to local fisheries, where potential for exploitation is considerable.

Sthenoteuthis oualaniensis, commonly known as *tobi-ika* or the purpleback flying squid, is a pelagic species that is distributed throughout the tropical and subtropical Indo-Pacific region. In Hawaii, small-boat handline fishermen use jigs to capture them throughout the year. Squid landings in Hawaii are modest and fluctuate greatly between years. The market potential is limited since this species is not highly valued as food but as bait.

***Sthenoteuthis oualaniensis*, commonly known as *tobi-ika* or the purpleback flying squid, is caught and used as bait by Hawaii small-boat handline fisherman throughout the year.**

Photo courtesy of NMFS Honolulu Laboratory

***Thysanoteuthis rhombus*, commonly known as the diamondback squid or *sode-ika*, is one of the largest pelagic squids reaching well over one meter in length and weighing up to 50 lbs. Its large tender, muscular mantle commands a premium price upon landing both locally and in Japan.**

Photo courtesy of NMFS Honolulu Laboratory

Thysanoteuthis rhombus, commonly known as the diamondback squid or *sode-ika*, is one of the largest pelagic squids reaching well over one meter in length and weighing up to 50 lbs. It is a common but not abundant inhabitant of warm tropical and subtropical open waters of the world. Individuals are often found in pairs at the water's surface and are also commonly found stranded on beaches, particularly after rough weather. A small jig and longline fishery for these squid exists in the Sea of Japan and in waters near Okinawa. In waters to the north and around Hawaii, high seas longliners and handline tuna fishers incidentally catch this squid. Its large tender, muscular mantle commands a premium price upon landing both locally and in Japan.

Council Celebrates 25th Anniversary

Past and present Council family members and friends celebrated the organization's 25th anniversary this year: (from left) Wadsworth Yee, Council's first chair, 1976–86; Richard Shomura, former director, NMFS Honolulu Laboratory; Ed Araki, Honolulu Agency (Nikkatsuren); Kitty M. Simonds, Council executive director; and Bill Paty, former chair of the Council and the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources.

During its October 2001 meeting, the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council celebrated its silver anniversary. Past and present Council members joined together at a Waikiki Yacht Club reception to reflect on recent accomplishments and future goals.

"Three prominent themes have given focus to this work in the last five years and provide direction for our journey ahead," noted Council Executive Director Kitty Simonds.

Healthy fisheries: The Western Pacific region has the healthiest fisheries in the US exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The region provides two-thirds of the world tuna catch and boasts three of the top 10 US ports in the nation by value of landings. Fisheries are managed under fishery management plans (FMPs) for pelagic species, bottomfish and seamount groundfish, crustaceans and precious corals and the new coral reef ecosystem FMP. These FMPs are constantly reviewed to ensure dynamic and far-sighted policies to effect sustainable interactions with the ocean resources.

International work: Since its inception, the Council has recognized that managing the highly migratory species that roam the Pacific necessitates international cooperation. Since 1999, the Council has assisted in hosting four of the seven meetings of the Multilateral High Level Conference (MHLC) to develop the first international treaty to manage fisheries in the central and western Pacific. A crowning achievement of the MHLC was the creation of a tuna treaty in 2000, which establishes an international fishery commission to oversee migratory fish stocks. Also in 2000, the Council co-hosted an international conference focusing on derelict fishing gear from distant North Pacific trawl fisheries and their potential impact on endangered and protected species and coral reef ecosystems.

Ecosystem-Based Management: Besides developing the nation's first ecosystem-based FMP (the Coral Reef Ecosystem FMP), the Council has actively supported traditional Pacific Island ways that view people as not just stewards of ocean resources but as participants in an intergenerational ecological process. This cultural outlook has allowed Pacific Islanders to survive several millennia isolated on small chains of land in a vast ocean. Since 1996, the Council has been working to establish community demonstration projects that actively foster and promote traditional indigenous fishing and conservation practices. New federal legislation passed in 1996 that directs the fees collected from foreign vessels fishing in the US EEZs around the Pacific Islands to be allocated to fund local marine conservation projects. In 1999, the Council set aside 20 percent of bottomfish permits for the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Mau Zone to establish community development programs to increase the share of economic benefits indigenous peoples receive from commercial fisheries.

Other Accomplishments: In 1997, the Council began guiding the development and

management of an emerging longline fishery in American Samoa, which features a large base of small artisanal vessels as well as larger conventional longliners.

In 1998, the Council took the lead in convening the first major conference in Honolulu on the black-footed albatross. It also initiated educational workshops and informational booklets for fishermen on new ways to avoid catching seabirds and funded a study to find ways to protect seabirds, especially the endangered short-tailed albatross.

In 1998, the Council also convened a symposium on Pacific Island game fish tournaments. In 1999, it formed the Recreational Fisheries Data Task Force in order to address the lack of information about these valuable fisheries. In 2001, the Council created the Recreational and Charter Fisheries Advisory Sub-Panel to give these fishermen a greater voice in federal fishery management.

Ongoing Projects for the Coming Years:

The Council strongly advocates an international agreement to protect highly migratory sea turtles and is preparing a sea turtle conservation assessment and an international conference to find ways to develop turtle-friendly fishing gear for all domestic and foreign fleets.

Participants and organizers of the Multilateral High Level Conference (MHLC) celebrated the creation of the first interantional treaty to manage fisheries in the central and western Pacific in 2000. The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council assisted in hosting four of the seven MHLC meetings leading to the treaty.

The Council will continue to bring people together to find ways to bridge conservation causes and indigenous cultural practices. For example, traditional use of sea turtles (a protected species), sharks and other marine life can run counter to current conservation legislation and practices.

Education, along with regulation, is the most effective way to regulate the 1.5 million square miles of ocean that constitute the Western Pacific Region, which comprise nearly half of the nation's EEZ. The Council is committed to a long-term investment in education, including the development of classroom materials for children, to ensure the respect for the ocean resources that have defined our island way of life.

Eligibility Criteria for Indigenous Programs *continued from page 1*

bottomfishing permits for the Mau Zone of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

Under the CDPP, three to five eligible communities may be funded per grant cycle for projects demonstrating the applicability and feasibility of traditional indigenous marine conservation and fishing practices. Congress has appropriated $500,000 each year for this program.

"We've waited years for these programs to make their way through the NMFS bureaucracy," noted Manuel Duenas, president of the Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association. "We hope they can support much needed fisheries development in Guam to help eligible island communities get some of the wealth that is now being enjoyed almost solely by distant-water fishing nations."

"We anticipate that the initial project solicitation will occur in January 2002," said Charles Ka'ai'ai, the Council's indigenous coordinator. At the request of Council's Community Development Advisory Committee, which met this November, a second solicitation is planned for June or July 2002, Ka'ai'ai added.

To be eligible to participate in either program, a community must meet the following criteria:

* Be located in American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam or Hawaii (i.e., the Western Pacific area);
* Consist of community residents descended from aboriginal people indigenous to the Western Pacific area who conducted commercial or subsistence fishing using traditional fishing practices in the waters of the Western Pacific;
* Consist of community residents who reside in their ancestral homeland;
* Have knowledge of customary practices relevant to fisheries of the Western Pacific;
* Have a traditional dependence on fisheries in the Western Pacific;
* Experience economic or other barriers that have prevented full participation in the Western Pacific fisheries and, in recent years, have not had harvesting, processing or marketing capability sufficient to support substantial participation in fisheries in the area; and
* Develop and submit a Community Development Plan to the Council and NMFS.

At its October 2001 meeting, the Council recommended that efforts be made to distribute available funds equally among the four island areas and that multi-year projects be eligible for funding.

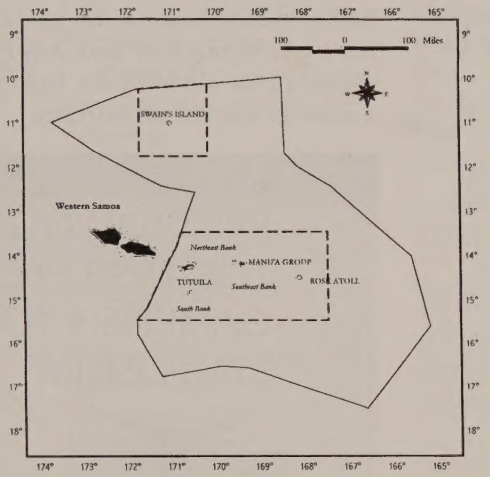
Congress established the CDP and CDPP in 1996. The Council initially submitted eligibility criteria for these programs for NMFS approval in 1998.

For more information, contact the Council's indigenous coordinator at charles.kaaiai@noaa.gov.

Longline Moratorium, Large Vessel Area Closure Proposed for American Samoa

Pago Pago harbor, American Samoa: The large-vessel segment of the longline fleet has grown from only three vessels last year to more than 22 large vessels today.

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council in October voted to recommend that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) implement emergency regulations to stop new entry of U.S. longline vessels over 50 feet in length from fishing in American Samoa. Under the proposed regulations, longline vessels that do not hold a longline permit and have not documented a catch prior to Oct. 25, 2001, would not be able to fish in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) around American Samoa. This moratorium would remain in effect until a limited entry program is implemented.



Map of proposed 50 nm closed area (hatched lines) for large pelagic fishing vessels operating around American Samoa.

Henry Sesepasara, fisherman and advisor on American Samoan culture, emphasized the need for this action due to the American Samoan community's cultural dependence on fish. This constant demand has been met through a fleet of 30-foot, open-decked catamarans, known as *alia*. A rapidly expanding fleet of longline vessels larger than 50 feet in length now threatens the local supply.

This large-vessel segment of the longline fleet has grown from only three vessels last year to more than 22 large vessels today. More are expected to join this segment of the fleet in the near future.

Compared to the small *alia*, these large longline vessels have much greater fishing power: two to three times the number of hooks, longer longlines, longer fishing time per set and greater holding capacity.

As a consequence of the rapid expansion, the potential fishing effort around American Samoa has increased from less than 500,000 hooks during the first quarter of 2001 to 1.8 million hooks during the third quarter of the year. Because the EEZ around American Samoan is relatively small and surrounded on all sides by foreign EEZs, this expansion could deplete the local availability of tuna stocks.

The proposed moratorium would be an additional safeguard beyond the area closure for large pelagic vessels (i.e., larger than 50 feet overall) proposed by the Council at its June 2000 meeting. Specifically, the Council recommended closing the area approximately 50 nautical miles around the islands of American Samoa to large vessels fishing for pelagic management unit species.

Foreign Fishing Agreements Now Possible for CNMI, US Pacific Remote Islands

For years, many Pacific Island countries have received substantial revenue by allowing foreign vessels to operate in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) surrounding them. However, the US Pacific islands have not been able to take advantage of this opportunity as the federal government requires that each island area first have a marine conservation plan (MCP), detailing how the revenues would be spent.

This summer, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) approved the MCPs for the Commonwealth of the Northern Marina Islands and the non-self governing U.S. Pacific Islands (i.e., Howland and Baker Islands, Wake Atoll, Johnston Atoll, Kingman Reef, Palmyra Atoll and Midway Atoll).

"Approval of these MCPs paves the way for Pacific Island Area Fishing Agreements (PIAFAs) to be established in these areas," noted Charles Ka'ai'ai, indigenous coordinator for the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council. However, approval is conditioned upon observer programs being established and approved by NMFS before entering into a PIAFA.

In September 2001, MCPs for American Samoa and Guam were transmitted to NMFS for approval.

In related news, Gov. Tauese Sunia of American Samoa suggested that a maritime boundary treaty be established with nearby Samoa (formerly, Western Samoa). According to a Dec. 18, 2001, *Samoa News* article, impetus for the treaty is continued violations by Samoa fishing boats operating in the EEZ surrounding American Samoa. The treaty would be initiated between the Samoa and American Samoa governments and the US Department of State to allow dual registration for fishing activities within the EEZ.

Billfish Symposium Highlights Pacific and Atlantic Differences

When it comes to managing marlin, the United States verges on schizophrenia, according to a presentation given by Jill Stevenson of NOAA Fisheries. On the East Coast, allocations are highly regulated. In the Western Pacific, there is a lack of any specific measures—no recreational licenses or bag limits, no commercial quotas, no size limits, no closed seasons. These reflect the major differences between marlin catches between the two regions. Atlantic stocks are overfished and still subject to high levels of fishing mortality. Marlin stocks in the Pacific are in better shape and subject to lower levels of fishing mortality around Hawaii and other US Pacific Islands. Another major difference between the two regions is that marlins are a popular food fish in Hawaii and the Western Pacific, compared to the mainland where eating marlins is generally frowned upon.

Stevenson's presentation was one of several that highlighted differences in attitude toward management and stock status of Atlantic and Pacific billfish given during the 3rd International Billfish Symposium Aug. 19–23, 2001, in Cairns, Australia.

"Several of the folks from the East Coast indicated that they would like to see Hawaii fall in line with the rest of the U.S., with no retention in most billfish fisheries and all marlin released," noted Paul Dalzell, pelagics coordinator for the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council. Regulations for marlins may also be developed through the establishment of a new pelagic fisheries management commission in the Western Pacific, currently being developed through a high-level conference series started in 1994.

During the symposium, Dalzell reported on U.S. fisheries catching marlins in the Western Pacific and reviewed the potential impacts of various recent management actions on these catches. For example, the ban on swordfish fishing by Hawaii longline vessels north of the equator will potentially reduce striped and blue marlin catches by this fleet by 30 and 45 percent, respectively. However, constraining the operations of the longline fishery in April and May north of 15°N could increase competitive interactions between longliners and small boats. Moreover, displaced vessels from Hawaii may be contributing to rapid expansion of longline fishing effort in America Samoa, where levels of fishing effort and blue marlin catches doubled in the second quarter of 2001.

"These domestic issues, plus the national trend towards minimizing billfish landings, will likely continue to preoccupy the Council in the future with respect to marlin management," Dalzell noted.

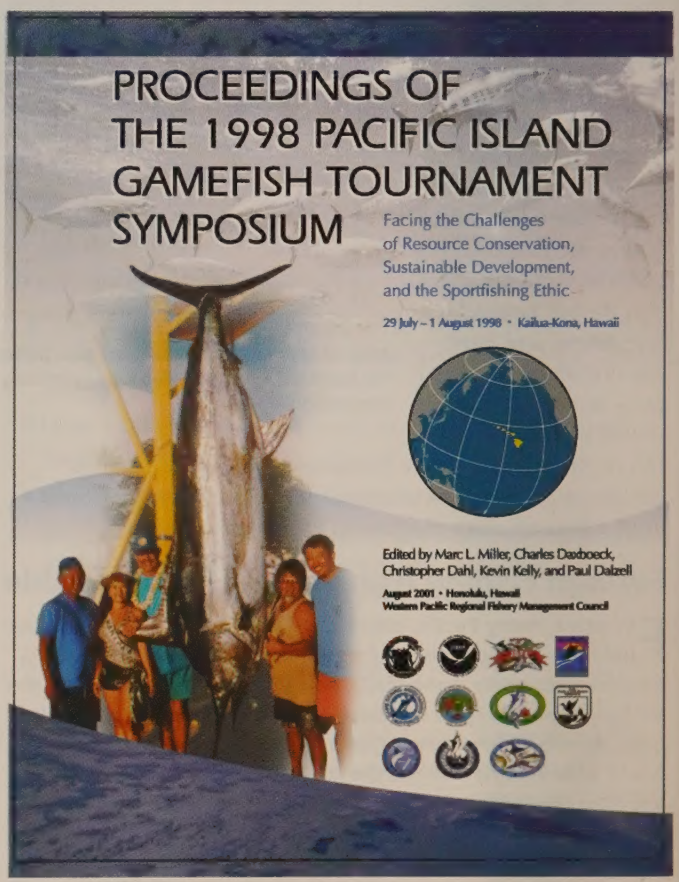
Among the points of interest from some of the other presentations were the following:

Most billfish in the Atlantic are overfished, while populations in the Indian and Pacific Oceans are probably being fished at around maximum sustainable yield (MSY), said Yuji Uozumi. An exception is the North Pacific swordfish, which is in a healthy state and fished at effort levels lower than MSY, according to a NMFS Honolulu Laboratory study.

Conventional tag and release programs have produced limited information due to low recapture and reporting rates, said Kim Holland of the University of Hawaii. More work is needed on developing identification guides to small billfish and improving international cooperation and observer programs to increase tag return rates.

Billfish anglers in the US Atlantic, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica and Pacific Mexcio are committed to catch and release and support resource conservation, said Robert Ditton of Texas A & M.

Post-release mortality rate of striped marlin appears to be in the 26 to 38 percent range, according to research conducted by Michael Domeier of the Pfleger Institute of Environmental Research. All gut hooked fish and fish retrieved bleeding have died. Any fish struggling and banging against a boat will likely die. Fight time does not appear to be a factor in post-release mortality.



The proceedings of the Pacific Island Gamefish Tournament Symposium, which was held August 1998 in Kona, Hawaii, are now available. For a copy, please call the Council at (808) 522-8220. You may also download the document from the Council's Web site at www.wpcouncil.org/doc.htm.

Think! Don't Throw

The ocean has long been seen as limitless and able to absorb anything that's dumped or discharged into it. However, many items of marine debris, especially plastics, take a long time to break down and may be lying around our beaches and reefs for many hundreds of years.

The "Think! Don't Throw" brochure provides info on how long it takes for various types of garbage to break down, what happens to garbage and oil that gets dumped overboard, what the law says and what individuals can do to help. Produced by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community with assistance from the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council and South Pacific Regional Environment Program, the brochure and companion poster are available by calling the Council at (808) 522-8220 or sending an e-mail to Lucinda.Knapman@noaa.gov.

Seafood HACCP Course

A basic Seafood Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) training course will be conducted to help the Hawaii seafood industry meet US Food and Drug Administration HACCP training requirements. The course will run Jan. 30 to Feb. 1, 2002 and costs $310 per person. To register, please call (808) 735-2602 or fax (808) 734-2315. Space is limited.

111th Council Meeting Highlights

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council convened Oct. 24–26, 2001, at the Hawaii Convention Center in Honolulu. During the meeting, the Council elected Frank Farm from Hawaii as Council chair, Benny Pangelinan as vice chair for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Aitofele Sunia as vice chair for American Samoa, Judith Guthertz as vice chair for Guam and Edwin Ebisui as vice chair for Hawaii.

Among the Council's key recommendations were the following:

Bottomfish management: Remove the "use it or lose it" requirements (which require annual landings) and provisions prohibiting the charter or lease of permits from the Bottomfish and Seamount Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The sale of permits would remain prohibited. The amendment aims to balance long-term productivity of bottomfish stocks with opportunities for small scale commercial fishermen, as well as provide for continued availability of high quality fresh bottomfish. The Bottomfish FMP limits issuance of permits to 10 for the Mau Zone, which encompasses federal waters surrounding Nihoa and Necker in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI), and seven for the Hoomalu Zone, which begins west of Necker Island and ends at the EEZ around Kure Atoll in the NWHI.

Alien species: Conduct an invasive species risk assessment by characterizing the shipping industry (fishing, cargo, military, cruise ship) for each island area. Educate fishermen on invasive species issues and methods to mitigate the potential for introducing alien species to island ecosystems.

Recreational fisheries: Develop a marine recreational data collection system and reporting programs (such as logbooks) for purely recreational fishermen to ensure they receive equal participation in fishery management.

Economic assistance: Contact other state and federal agencies to seek economic assistance for fisheries, especially the tourism-based charter vessel fisheries, that have been badly affected by the economic downturn as a result of the Sept. 11, 2001, tragedies.

For additional Council actions during the meeting, please see the articles on the America Samoa pelagic fisheries, North Pacific squid fishery and US Pacific island indigenous initiatives elsewhere in this newsletter.

Council members at the October 2001 meeting are decked in traditional *maile* leis to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council.

COUNCIL CALENDAR

JANUARY

16–17 Council Vessel Monitoring System/Enforcement meeting, Honolulu

22–31 3rd Interim Scientific Committee meeting for tuna and tuna-like species in the North Pacific Ocean, Nagasaki, Japan

30–Feb. 1 Seafood Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) basic course, Honolulu

FEBRUARY

5–7 Sea Turtle Cooperative Research Workshop, Honolulu

20–23 29th Annual Pacific Seabird Group Meeting, Santa Barbara, Calif.

21–March 1 2nd Preparatory Conference (MHLC), Madang, Papua New Guinea

TBA NOAA Coral Reef Workshop (Pacific Regional), Honolulu

MARCH

12–14 79th Scientific and Statistical Committee Meeting, Council conference room, Honolulu

18–22 112th Council Meeting, Ala Moana Hotel, Honolulu

TBA 14th US Tuna Treaty Consultation, Republic of Kiribati

APRIL

22–23 APEC Ministerial Meeting, Johannesburg, South Africa

TBA Crustacean Plan Team meeting, Council conference room, Honolulu

TBA Bottomfish Plan Team meeting, Council conference room, Honolulu

TBA Precious Coral Plan Team meeting, Council conference room, Honolulu

MAY

6–10 51st Forum Fisheries Committee Meeting, Federated States of Micronesia

14–16 80th Scientific and Statistical Committee Meeting, Kauai, Hawaii

20–24 53rd Tuna Conference, Lake Arrowhead, Calif.

26–31 Council Chair and Executive Director's Meeting, Sitka, Alaska

TBA Pelagics Plan Team meeting, Council conference room, Honolulu

Western Pacific Recipe: Chef Martin's Marlin Roll*

Ingredients:

2 lbs. marlin loin
fresh herbs
salt and pepper to taste
1 carrot
1 bell pepper
1 onion
cabbage

Roll out marlin loin. Sprinkle fresh herbs, salt and pepper onto the sheet of marlin. Cut the vegetables julienne style, place them on one side of the sheet and roll it. After you have rolled your roulade, take some string and tie it at both ends. Bake the roulade at 350° Fahrenheit for 15 minutes. Remove from oven, and let stand at room temperature for 5 minutes. Serve with pasta and a light cream sauce.

*courtesy of the Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association

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Chair Frank Farm (Hawaii)

Vice Chairs Aitofele Sunia (American Samoa) Edwin Ebisui (Hawaii)
Judith Guthertz (Guam) Benny Pangelinan (Northern Mariana Islands)

Executive Director Kitty M. Simonds

Record Catches, Stock Uncertainty Concern Tuna Experts

Scientists at the 14th meeting of the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish (SCTB) have recommended that yellowfin and bigeye tuna mortality associated with Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) surface fisheries should not increase until uncertainty in the current assessment of these stocks has been resolved. Meeting Aug. 9–16, 2001, in Noumea, New Caledonia, SCTB members noted the increasing catchability of juveniles of these species, particularly by those using fish aggregation devices (FADs).

According to the meeting's executive summary, "The initial overview of Western and Central Pacific (WCPO) tuna fisheries noted that the estimated total catch for 2000 for the four main tuna species was 1,852,746 mt, the second highest annual catch on record after 1998 (1,893,643 mt). The 2000 WCPO catch for skipjack (1,165,099 mt) was slightly higher than in 1999, but below the 1998 record catch (1,305,841 mt) and, as usual, dominated the total catch (63 percent). The yellowfin catch (421,533 mt) was slightly less than in 1999. The South Pacific albacore catches (41,835 mt) were slightly higher than in 1999, and the bigeye catch (114,907 mt) was a record high, eclipsing the previous record in 1999 (108,989 mt)."

To read the full executive summary, visit the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's Web site at http://www.sidsnet.org/pacific/spc/OceanFish/.